

EPA Dumping Ban Brings CF Industries Shutdown

T 9-10-76 By JIM CORBETT

The CF Industries fertilizer plant shut down operations Thursday in compliance with an Environmental Protection Agency order that the firm cease dumping untreated chemical wastes into Chickamauga Lake.

James Dickerson, CF plant superintendent, who announced the company's decision, said the closing could result in a "significant number" of the 188 employees being laid off for as long as 60 days while damaged pollution-control equipment is repaired.

EPA ordered the firm to halt the discharge effective Wednesday, leaving the company with the options of closing temporarily at an estimated cost of \$100,000 a day or using an uncompleted pond, designed to hold rainwater runoff, to store the waste water.

The state division of water quality control, objecting to the use of the holding pond, urged EPA to reconsider its order and allow the pollution discharge to continue for 60 days. EPA denied that request, however.

"CF Industries is faced

with a dilemma due to conflicting federal and state orders regarding the disposal of the plant's waste water," noted Dickerson.

Aggravating the firm's situation, Dickerson said, repair work on the pollution-control equipment, damaged by an explosion Aug. 27, has been brought to a halt by union picketing.

The Colston Construction Co., which is involved in

work on the holding pond, is using nonunion labor, a union official said, and Building Trades Council unionists set up the picket line to protest the firm's wages and working conditions.

Dickerson said, "The picket line has brought to a halt work on the treatment plant which was being done by a contractor using union craftsmen."

The only work under way to repair its work which can be performed by CF employees.

Dickerson said laying off employees will be necessary unless "the situation can be promptly resolved."

CF corporate lawyers could not be reached for comment, so it was not learned whether the company intended to fight the EPA order in court. Dickerson said the decision rests with the attorneys.

When the explosion damaged the waste-water equipment, both EPA and state water quality officials opened investigations into the spill that resulted.

EPA ordered the company to halt the discharge after company officials indicated that the holding pond could be used to store the waste water.

"That was their tentative decision yesterday," Jack McCormick of the state water quality control office here said Thursday. "But apparently they changed their minds and decided to shut down."

Company officials have indicated that they, like the state, objected to using the holding pond because the storage of waste water would delay its completion.

McCormick said the pond is designed to work with an already existing pond to prevent rainwater runoff from reaching Fryar's Branch. The branch is a tributary of South Chickamauga Creek, which flows into the Tennessee River above the city's drinking water intakes.

Tests at the lake where the chemical wastes were being dumped by CF indicated that continuation of the spill would not endanger fish or the water intakes.

EPA upheld its order after a meeting with the company officials in Atlanta on Wednesday.

"We still feel that this is the best approach at this point, with the option, of course, of coming back and looking at it again at a future date," said John A. Little, deputy regional EPA director.

EPA and company officials scheduled the future meeting for Oct. 20 to discuss "unforeseen circumstances" and whether the order should stand at that time.